

Coming Into Being



Sabina Spielrein,
Jung, Freud, and Psychoanalysis

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To Bluejay



per sempre

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For too long, the key role played by Sabina Spielrein in the early years of psychoanalysis has been overlooked. I hope that this book contributes to the well-deserved renewal of interest in her achievements and her legacy.

Lastly, I bear full responsibility for the content of this book.

Frank J. Marchese

December 31, 2015
Toronto, Canada

Introduction

Where love reigns, the ego, the ominous despot, dies.

Sabina Spielrein

THIS BOOK CONCERNS the Russian psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Sabina Spielrein, her relationship to Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, and her contribution to psychoanalysis in its early history and development. Spielrein began as a patient of Carl Jung and became a successful medical student, a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in her own right and a colleague of Jung and Freud. Yet it has been rightfully suggested that Spielrein was never accorded the recognition she deserved for her influence on the theory and practice of psychoanalysis (Covington, 2003a). Although Freud and Jung are regarded as pioneers of modern psychology, as one historian of psychoanalysis reminded us, “in the written history of psychoanalysis we look in vain for Sabina Spielrein” (Richebächer, 2003, p. 246). As a recent biographical commentary put it, she seems to have “vanished” from the psychoanalytic literature (Launer, 2011, p. 9).

“Vanished”? Ironic, in light of what the eminent child psychologist and psychoanalyst, Bruno Bettelheim (1983), noted in regard to Spielrein. He said she was “one of the

great pioneers of psychoanalysis” (p. 44). Two prominent historians of psychoanalysis, Appignanesi and Forrester (2000), concur with Bettelheim’s viewpoint. They remark that Spielrein was “the first woman analyst to have a significant theoretical impact on psychoanalysis” (p. 204). And yet, for most of the twentieth century, the main record of her existence consisted of “four footnotes” in Freud’s essays (Launer, 2011, p. 9).

Recently, however, there has been a rekindling of interest in Spielrein. In 2011, Canadian director David Cronenberg released a film entitled *A Dangerous Method*, about her relationship with Jung and Freud. There has also been renewed interest among academic writers such as Covington and Wharton (2003) and Allain-Dupré (2004).

In writing this book, my aim has been to bring certain aspects of Spielrein’s life into sharper relief. The book offers a review and analysis of the historical portrayal of Spielrein’s influence on Freud and Jung’s thinking, and broadens the scope of Spielrein’s place in the early years of the development of psychoanalysis. By examining her theoretical insights and her contributions to important concepts such as Freud’s death instinct, transference/ countertransference,¹

1. Transference: “Feelings a patient has for the psychoanalyst that are displacements from [significant others in] the patient’s past” (Liebert & Spiegler, 1998, p. 540). Also, countertransference: “Feelings the analyst has for the patient that are displacements from the analyst’s past” (Liebert & Spiegler, 1998, p. 520).

and Jung's concept of the anima,² the book will help to restore Spielrein's deserved place among those early pioneers in psychoanalysis. Furthermore, this book explores the *method* that these three principal figures developed and utilized in the early days of analytic therapy as a treatment technique for mental illness. It reveals how Spielrein, Jung, and Freud were profoundly affected—individually, personally, and collectively—by the very “method for madness,” or “talking cure,” they employed with those afflicted with mental problems.

It is necessary to shed some light on the beginnings of psychoanalysis, especially in regard to Spielrein's overlooked contributions to the early years of its development. Just as it was with Josef Breuer (1842–1925), whose role was minimized by Freud over the years, so it was with Spielrein, whose contributions were ignored outright by the psychoanalytic establishment. Freud refashioned the history of psychoanalysis to suit his purposes, with his “Dream of Undying Fame.” As Breger (2009) comments, Freud placed himself at the forefront of developments in psychoanalysis while failing to give due credit to others. It was not until 1920, in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, that Freud openly acknowledged the importance of Spielrein's efforts. In 1930, in his *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud made a further attempt at acknowledgement. There he tried to understand why he

2. The anima is “the archetype of the ‘feminine’ aspects of men” (Liebert & Spiegler, 1998, p. 512).

had not been receptive to her ideas years earlier (Cremerius, 2003). His admissions came eight and eighteen years, respectively, after the publication of her seminal contribution to psychoanalytic theory, "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being" of 1912 (Spielrein, 1912/1994).

This book is an exploration of the relationships that developed between Spielrein, Jung, and Freud. In concentrating on the intricacies of these relationships, we gain a glimpse of why Spielrein was not given due credit at the time she presented her key ideas. It has been suggested that "Freud and Jung rejected Sabina Spielrein's theory in its entirety" (Launer, 2011, p. 10). For example, she postulated an inevitable conflict between two drives: on the one hand, the drive to self-preservation, which protected the individual's personal survival; and the species-reproduction drive on the other, which pressed for continuance of the species through procreative acts. As the aim of the species-preservation drive asserted itself, it came into conflict with the self-preservation drive; for as the former pressed for expression through the act of procreation, the individual was required to sacrifice his or her identity to bring about new life.

According to Spielrein, reproduction was both destructive and creative; it was destructive of the individual's identity but creative for the continuance of the species. As Spielrein said of these two competing drives, "No change can take place without destruction of the former [identity] condition" (1912/1994, p. 174). While reproduction created a new generation, it also destroyed the original identity of both the

male and female. The interweaving of the idea of sacrifice, comprising both love and death (destruction), implied that nothing new can come into being without destruction of the old order. "The individual," she said, "must strongly hunger for this new creation in order to place its own destruction in creation's service" (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 156). In other words, reproduction predominated over survival, since the singular aims of the individual did not always harmonize with the collective aims of reproduction. As Spielrein said, "We see that the collective desires living within us do not correspond to personal desires" (1912/1994, p. 162).

This principle, implied in Spielrein's conceptualization of the reproductive drive, forms the basis of modern evolutionary theory; as some evolutionary psychologists and biologists have suggested, we devote our energy not to keeping our own individual identity alive, but to transferring whatever we can to succeeding generations (Dawkins, 1976; Buss, 2012).

Spielrein's theoretical speculations (as presented in "Destruction as the Cause of Coming into Being") were prescient, for they anticipated developments in late twentieth-century evolutionary psychology in which sexual attraction, mate selection, and reproduction are key topics (e.g., Dawkins, 1976; Buss, 2012). As for psychoanalysis, she influenced Jung and Freud's thinking about the death instinct, sadism and masochism, Jung's concept of the anima, and the conflicting and ambivalent feelings that arise in the sexual domain: feelings of desire, anxiety, and disgust. With reference to these feel-

ings, Spielrein said, “The joyful feeling of coming into being that is present in the reproductive drive is accompanied by a feeling of resistance, of anxiety and disgust...[These] feeling[s] directly correspond to the destructive component of the sexual instinct” (1912/1994, p. 157). Spielrein commented that the reproductive drive “consist[s] of two psychologically antagonistic components, a destructive drive as well as a drive for coming into being” (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 184). In the pages to follow, her dualistic conception of human nature, combining destructive and creative components, will be more fully discussed.

In summary, the purpose of this book is to present to the general reader—as well as to those specialists in the fields of psychoanalysis, psychology, and biology—a well-documented treatment of Spielrein’s ideas, the interpersonal context in which her ideas and theory developed, and the importance of her relationships with Freud and Jung, which served as a source of inspiration to her interests in psychoanalysis. I gather the singular references to her from a variety of sources (e.g., Allain-Dupré, 2004), and bring these disparate citations together into a readable account of her place in the development of psychoanalysis.

In undertaking this task, I will try to answer a question raised by one historian of psychoanalysis, who observed, “We are left with the question of why an analyst who was so distinguished in the early years of psychoanalysis is not well known, why her papers are not cited. They [and she] are truly ‘forgotten’” (Cremerius, 2003, p. 70). I hope that

this book will bring Spielrein out from the silence that comes with being “forgotten” to a place where she is remembered. By breaking the silence that continues to surround her life and work, her contributions to psychoanalysis during its early years may be more deservedly appreciated.

I might add that the name “Spielrein,” in German, might suggest “fair play.” And therefore, I hope, as well, that my book honours both the meaning and spirit embodied in Sabina’s name.

CHAPTER ONE

Background to A (Most) Dangerous Method

Nothing is “given” as real except our world of desires and passions, that we can rise or sink to no other “reality” than the reality of our drives—for thinking is only the relationship of these drives to one another.

Friedrich Nietzsche

SO, WHO WAS Sabina Spielrein? At first glance this question may be answered simply, though not comprehensively.

Sabina Spielrein is the subject of David Cronenberg’s film, *A Dangerous Method*. The film features Keira Knightley as Sabina Spielrein (1885-1942), Michael Fassbender as Carl Jung (1875–1961), and Viggo Mortensen as Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). The film has been described by some commentators as a docudrama, as it “falls between two stools, at once an historical documentary and, at another level, a drama about ill-fated love, both of the heart and of the mind” (Aguayo, 2012, p. 1). Specifically, this film tells the story of Spielrein’s relationship with Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and analyst, as well as her encounter with Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. This film was

based in part on the available source material and may be considered, according to Aguayo, a “cinematic portal” (2012, p. 1) to the transference/countertransference to which the principal dramatis personae, Spielrein and Jung, succumbed.

Considering, however, that Spielrein was a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, one might wonder after watching this film, what were her contributions to Freud and Jung’s thinking? What part did she play in the early history of psychoanalysis? What became of her after she was no longer a patient of Carl Jung? What became of her following her professional relationship with Freud?

I will address these questions by consulting the source material that documents her life and work. Much of the archival documentation on Spielrein’s life and work consists of her diary, letters, and drafts of letters that she wrote to Freud and Jung, as well as letters Freud and Jung wrote in response to Spielrein (Kerr, 1994).

A portion of these documents formed the basis of a book published in 1982 by Aldo Carotenuto, under the title *A Secret Symmetry*. At the time of the book’s publication, Carotenuto was a professor of personality at the University of Rome and a Jungian analyst. Carotenuto’s *A Secret Symmetry* was followed by an in-depth scholarly work, *A Most Dangerous Method* (1994), by John Kerr, a clinical psychologist and historian of the early history of psychoanalysis. The title of Kerr’s book coincides with Cronenberg’s film title. Here, however, we should leave nothing to coincidence.

It is important to note that the title of Kerr's book, and the title of Cronenberg's film, make use of the phrase "a most dangerous method." This phrase was most likely borrowed from the American psychologist and philosopher, William James (1842–1910), who employed it in a letter written on September 28, 1909 to his friend and fellow psychologist, Theodore Flournoy (1854–1920) (as cited in Kerr, 1994, pp. 244–245). James had recently met Freud and Jung in September of 1909, at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and he shared his impressions of that meeting with Flournoy (Kerr, 1994). Freud and Jung had been invited by the president of Clark University, G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924), to give a series of lectures as part of the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the founding of the University.

As the first president of Clark University and of the American Psychological Association, Hall was highly regarded among his peers, both academically and professionally (Marchese, 1995). Although he was a pioneering psychologist specializing in child and adolescent development, and not a clinically trained psychologist or psychoanalyst, he recognized the importance of Freud's work for general psychology. Alert and ambitious, as well as eclectic, Hall was an advocate for novel ideas in psychology; Freud's work had quickly caught his attention in the early 1900s. In his two-volume treatise *Adolescence* (1904), Hall alluded several times to Freud's ideas about sexuality (Gay, 1988). Thus, Hall had prepared the ground for Freud's visit well in advance of his formal invitation to Freud in 1909. As Gay (1988)

observed, “[Hall] was an enterprising psychologist [and] far from fearing controversy, he cultivated it” (p. 206). Freud, already a controversial figure within the fields of general and clinical psychology, suited Hall’s “enterprising” spirit of not “fearing controversy,” and thus Hall was happy to introduce Freud’s psychoanalysis to an American audience. At the Clark University celebrations, Freud was duly honoured by his hosts, receiving the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, which he proudly accepted September 10, 1909. Freud was delighted with the enthusiasm his audience showed him at Clark, calling the occasion “the first official recognition of our endeavors” in psychoanalysis (as cited in Gay, 1988, p. 207).

However, days prior to his arrival in America, during his trans-Atlantic voyage, Freud had quipped to his traveling companion and co-invitee, Carl Jung, “Don’t they know we’re bringing them the plague?” (as cited in Prochnik, 2006, p. 18), thus betraying his ambivalence about what America represented to him personally, and what he believed psychoanalysis had to offer his American cousins. Well in advance of setting foot on American shores, over the years Freud had expressed anti-American sentiments, claiming his Old World of Europe was “governed by authority,” while the New World of America was governed “by the dollar” (as cited in Gay, 1988, p. 562). Gay, Freud’s biographer, commented, for “Freud the United States was, in a word, ‘Dollaria’” (1988, p. 568). And in 1925, when Samuel Goldwyn of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer films was to offer Freud the sum of \$100,000 US dollars to write a film on psychoanalysis,

the Viennese boulevard paper, *Die Stunde*, claiming to base its story on an interview with Freud, reported that Freud responded to Goldwyn's request for an interview with a one sentence letter: "I do not intend to see Mr. Goldwyn" (as cited in Gay, 1988, p. 454).

Though Freud was well received by his American audience at Clark University, this was to be his first and only visit to America. Years later he reminisced, "We found to our great surprise that the unprejudiced men in that small but reputable university knew all about psychoanalytic literature," employing the subject in their lectures (as cited in Gay, 1988, pp. 207–208).

It is worth noting that, in addition to Spielrein, other early contributors have also failed to receive proper acknowledgement, having been similarly overshadowed by Freud. In the Clark lectures, Freud paid homage to his former colleague, Josef Breuer (1842–1925),³ senior author of *Studies on Hysteria*, by acknowledging that he and Freud jointly published the work in 1895. As Freud outlined the essential features of psychoanalysis, he graciously offered the following admission to his Clark University audience:

If it is a merit to have brought psycho-analysis into being, that merit is not mine. I had no share in its earliest beginnings. I was a student working for my final examinations at the time when another Vien-

3. They collaborated on the first treatise devoted to psychoanalytic theory and method, *Studies on Hysteria*, published in 1895.

nese physician, Dr. Josef Breuer...in 1880...made use of this procedure on a girl who was suffering from hysteria. (as cited in Breger, 2009, pp. 1–2)

The patient suffering from hysteria was the famous “Anna O.” (Bertha Pappenheim, 1859–1936). Breuer respected her confidentiality and did not reveal the details of the case to Freud until several years after Breuer had ceased to be her physician and the case had been concluded. When Breuer was treating Anna O., Freud was a medical student and only twenty-four years of age. The importance of her case was recognized by both Breuer and Freud, and they included it in their 1895 book. For the record, it was Anna O. who brought the “talking cure” to Breuer’s attention, calling it “chimney sweeping,” during their path-breaking therapeutic encounter of the early 1880s (Breger, 2009). Anna O. and Breuer’s successful collaborative approach in the treatment of her illness, diagnosed as hysteria, predated by some fifteen years Freud’s application of the talking cure with his own patients in the 1890s. Yet, in subsequent publications over the years, Freud came to limit the credit he initially gave to Breuer as a forerunner of psychoanalytic theory and therapeutic practice, and increasingly referred to himself as the sole inventor of psychoanalysis (Breger, 2009).

Overall, in light of the favorable reception he received at Clark, Freud felt vindicated of the criticism he received in Europe. Years later he remarked, “In Europe, I felt like someone excommunicated; here [at Clark University] I saw myself received by the best as equal. It was like the realiza-

tion of an incredible daydream, as I stepped up to the lectern at Worcester" (as cited in Gay, 1988, p. 207).

William James's phrase "a most dangerous method" reveals the skepticism that James felt regarding Freud's analysis of his patients' clinical material in the context of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. Freud's single-minded interpretation of clinical material, such as symptoms, dreams, defenses, slips of speech, and forgetfulness, as symbolic of deeper, unconscious psychological processes made James uneasy. In his letter to Flournoy, James wrote that, although the ideas embodied in Freud's work "may throw light on human nature," he had to confess that Freud gave him the "impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas." He continued, "I can make nothing in my own case with his dream theories, and obviously 'symbolism' is a 'most dangerous method'" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 245).

James believed that the interpretation of clinical material as symbolic of deeper (unconscious) processes left too much to the interpretive imagination of the clinician. How was one to distinguish between an appropriate interpretation and a tendentious one? And if a patient might acquiesce to a given symbolic interpretation, did this constitute a scientific validation for a method based on the interpretation of psychic material, dreams, and symptoms, viewed now as symbols having unique clinical meanings (Kerr, 1994)?

Let us take an example of how Freud worked with symbols from his analysis of a dream provided by the patient "Dora" (Freud, 1905/1986). When Dora described a dream

that included a jewel-case belonging to her mother, Freud insisted on its vaginal symbolism, later adding, "The box... like the reticule and the jewel-case, was once again only a substitute for the shell of Venus, for the female genitals" (p. 114). In this example, the possibility of several meanings of the jewel-case is denied and one definitive, sexual, meaning is put forward. For psychoanalysis, dream interpretation led Freud to fixed symbolic meanings of the dream content provided by his patients, as was in the case with Dora. Yet, Freud's method of "free association," whereby the patient is instructed to say whatever comes to mind (and in the case of a dream, to freely associate on a particular element of the dream, such as the jewel-case), suggests the unlimited possibilities of what a particular element in the dream may mean. It must be remembered that, according to Freud, at the base of hysterical illnesses were problems of sexuality, and both neurotic symptoms and dreams could be read and interpreted as symbolic expressions of repressed wishes and desires, particularly of a sexual nature (Thurschwell, 2009).

Freud's tendency of fixing universal (sexual) symbolism, as laid out in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1933), to psychic material, as in the above episode of Dora's dream, excludes other possibilities as to what the content of a dream or neurotic symptoms might mean. Is it reasonable to assume, for example, that a knife image in a dream always symbolizes a penis, or that a jewel-case, cave, or pocket, the vagina? Freud's approach would assume so. For psychoanalysis, then, interpretation of dreams or symptoms is a

contradictory creature: Freudian symbolism suggests fixed meanings, largely sexual in nature, of the dream element (or symptom), while Freud's method of free association suggests the limitless possibilities as to what the free associations to a dream could mean as the patient retells and reconstructs the possible significance of a dream element recalled, or in the case of a particular symptom, what the latter may mean to the patient as the patient free associates on the symptom.

Freud had unshakable confidence in the analysis of dreams (and symptoms) as a way of understanding the patient's unconscious motives and desires. Freud declared that:

The interpretation of dreams is in fact the *royal road* [emphasis in original] to a knowledge of the unconscious; it is the securest foundation of psychoanalysis and the field in which every worker must acquire his convictions and seek his training. If I am asked how one can become a psychoanalyst, I reply: "By studying one's own dreams." (Freud, 1910/1986, p. 33)

William James, on the other hand, would not likely have agreed with Freud's claim. He was not convinced of the soundness of Freud's method for the understanding of the unconscious, which relied on the analyst's interpretation of the source of a patient's hysteria. As James said, "I can make nothing in my own case with his dream theories." Further, since James felt that Freud gave him the "impression of a man obsessed with fixed ideas" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 245), it is likely that James did not believe that psychoanalysis, in all respects, could qualify as legitimate science.

Freud would have rebutted such a sentiment, since he insisted that psychoanalysis was a science, an objective branch of clinical medicine.

As early as 1895, Freud sought to integrate physics, biology, and neurology with psychology, hoping to make psychology a natural science for neurologists, as neurology was his medical specialty. His effort in this vein came to be known as a *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (Fancher, 1973). In draft form, Freud began the *Project* as follows: “The intention is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science” (Freud, 1895/1986, p. 295). This undertaking was an attempt by Freud to place psychology within the field of psycho- physics and thus, his model of the mind would be wedded to brain physiology. As Makari (2008) has noted, “He [Freud] hoped to make a psychology for neurologists” (p. 71). Therefore, Freud’s aim was to employ knowledge of neurology in constructing a hypothetical model of the mind that could account for neurotic as well as normal mental functioning (Fancher, 1973). To his one-time confidant, Wilhelm Fliess (1858–1925), a physician with a tendency for bold biological theorizing, Freud wrote on April 27, 1895, “Scientifically, I am in a bad way; namely, caught up in ‘The Psychology for Neurologists,’ which regularly consumes me totally until, actually overworked, I must break off” (Freud, 1985, p. 127). Freud eventually abandoned his project, recognizing that the marriage of mind and body—the union between inner psychical experiences and physiological processes—was at that time premature. In a letter to Fliess, dated Novem-

ber 29, 1895, Freud confessed, “I no longer understand the state of mind in which I hatched the psychology...[T]o me it appears to have been a kind of madness” (Freud, 1985, p. 152). Freud put the drafts away and never published them during his lifetime. However, throughout his long career, Freud never really lost sight of the *Project*. He strove to place psychoanalysis on a firm scientific footing, whereby neurophysiology would serve as the organic substrate of mind, encompassing normal and abnormal, conscious and unconscious, states. Neither before nor since has such an ambitious model of mind been envisioned or articulated.

It was not until 1950, eleven years after Freud’s death, that Ernst Kris, “a noted art historian, psychoanalyst, and student of Freud’s” (Kandel, 2012, p. 53), edited and published the *Project*. The subsequent impact Freud’s *Project* has had in the field of cognitive neuroscience was nicely summarized by Kandel (2012), a Nobel laureate (2000) and neuroscientist, in the following way: “In trying to formulate a scientific psychology, Freud...[was] undertaking a challenge that was almost a century ahead of its time. Indeed, [Freud’s]...goal of grounding the science of mind in biology is completely in accord with the goals we are only now pursuing at the beginning of the twenty-first century” (p. 53).

The critics still abounded years after Freud’s initial attempt to create a scientific psychology, and through his continued clinical and theoretical work to fashion psychoanalysis into a science. James and other contemporary critics of Freud (e.g., Bleuler, see below), were not convinced

of the scientific status of psychoanalysis. As James's remark reveals, "a man obsessed with fixed ideas" is not likely to be open to a critique of his system, and that would be contrary, at the very least, to the scientific method which emphasizes open inquiry, peer critique, and challenge.

Others were not as polite as James in expressing their reservations about Freud. Frustrated by Freud's authoritarian posture, Eugen Bleuler (1857–1939), director of the Burghölzli Clinic, said in a letter to Freud dated November 3, 1913, "No matter how great your scientific accomplishments are, psychologically you impress me as an *artist* [emphasis added]" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 441). On the basis of Bleuler's comment, the question becomes, just how much can one attribute to psychoanalysis the status of science versus art? In spite of Freud's insistence, however, on psychoanalysis as science, his contemporary, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), a noted twentieth-century Viennese philosopher and intellectual, dismissed psychoanalysis as powerful mythology, indeed considering it to be mere speculation rather than scientific theory. And yet, Wittgenstein's sister was once an analysand of Freud's and was instrumental years later in 1938, in helping Freud and his family escape the Nazis (Heaton, 2000).

As was the case with Bleuler, ambivalence surrounded those who would initially embrace and then later become disenchanted with Freudian psychoanalysis. Bleuler, despite his misgivings about psychoanalysis in his 1913 letter, had written in 1896 a very complimentary review of Breuer and Freud's *Studies on Hysteria*. Bleuler wrote that the Breuer-

Freud publication was “one of the most important...of the last few years in the field of normal and abnormal psychology” (as cited in Covington, 2003a, p. 11). However, Bleuler would have a different response to the bold assertions of Freud’s that were yet to come.

Bleuler’s later opinions, however, may have reflected his reservations regarding the untested parts of Freud’s psychoanalytic pronouncements, which were based on Freud’s persuasive powers and Freud’s interpretation of the clinical material that, in the final analysis, failed to constitute scientific proof. Casting the clinical data into symbolic form and proceeding to interpret these symbols as evidence of unconscious processes left much to the imagination of the clinician, permitting the clinician’s bias to operate freely as potential self-fulfilling hypotheses. Bleuler said in a 1909 letter to Freud:

There is a difference between us...For you [psychoanalysis]...became the aim...of your whole life to establish firmly your theory and to secure its acceptance...For me, the theory is only one new truth among other truths...I am therefore less tempted to sacrifice my whole personality for the advancement of the cause...[T]he principle of “all or nothing” is necessary for religious sects and for political parties...[F]or science I consider it harmful. (as cited in Breger, 2000, p. 191)

Freud’s steadfast commitment to psychoanalysis—evident in Bleuler’s statement that “psychoanalysis became the

aim of his [Freud's] whole life"—is also reflected in his admission to Fliess shortly after the publication of *Studies on Hysteria*. Freud told Fliess, "A man like me cannot live without a hobby horse, without a consuming passion, without—in Schiller's words—a tyrant. I have found one. In its service I know no limits. It is psychology" (Freud, 1985, p. 129).

Thus Bleuler, although supportive of Freud's psychoanalytic ideas initially, cast a critical eye toward Freud's mission to have his theory securely accepted. As far as Bleuler could tell, Freud insisted on acceptance of psychoanalysis as "all or nothing." In a similar vein, Freud's one-time collaborator and eventually-to-be-estranged friend, Josef Breuer, complained that it was not the matter of Freud's exclusive emphasis on the sexual etiology of neurosis but rather science that made them part company. As Breuer observed, "Freud is a man given to absolute and exclusive formulations" (as cited in Makari, 2008, p. 92). Breuer's perception of Freud coincides with Bleuler's: Freud was unequivocal, he expected his formulations to be accepted in their totality, even though credible, empirical support might have been lacking.

Freud also had other notable critics. In an overall review of Freud's work as of 1914, Carl Furtmüller (1867–1940), a social critic and friend of Freud's colleague, Alfred Adler (1870–1937),⁴ noted, "For many years now Freud has followed the same practice in his works; he pays no attention to criticisms and arguments directed at his theories, and he

4. Adler would later split with Freud over a bitter doctrinal dispute.

continues to build on the foundations which he has laid out as if they were now confirmed by scientific evidence and did not require further discussion" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 439). And Max Graf (1873–1958), a member of Freud's Vienna group, offered the following comment on the debates he witnessed during the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society meetings of the early 1900s. Graf said, "There was an atmosphere of the foundation of a religion in that room." Graf added that Freud reigned "as head of a church" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 335). Had Freud, as founder and head of the psychoanalytic movement, created a secular religion, rejecting any critique of his doctrine as blasphemy? As far as Graf was concerned, he had. As for dissenters, Freud argued their failure to embrace his doctrines revealed a kind of neurotic resistance.

Believing that he saw through Freud's ploy of placing his detractors on the defensive, Jung acerbically commented to Freud, "I am objective enough to see through your little trick. You go around sniffing out all the symptomatic actions in your vicinity, thus reducing everyone to the level of sons and daughters who blushing admit the existence of their faults. Meanwhile you remain on top as the father, sitting pretty" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, pp. 335–336). Just as Freud's relationship with Breuer came apart in the mid-1890s, so would his relationship with Fliess in the early 1900s; and his relationship with Jung would rapidly unravel by 1912. Differences in temperament and doctrinal disagreements would likely be contributing factors to the strain that arose between Freud

and Breuer, and Freud and Jung, leading to the eventual dissolution of what were at one time for Freud productive collaborations and friendships.

It may be noted at this point that Spielrein and Freud's relationship was on the whole quite satisfactory from its beginning in 1909 until Spielrein left for her homeland in Russia, in 1923. She was able to avoid the ruptures that seemed to plague those intimately and instrumentally involved with Freud in the early years of the development of psychoanalysis. Freud set the stage for his June 12, 1914 pronouncement (Carotenuto, 1982, p. 123; see also p. 55 of this volume), expressing his antipathy toward Jung in a letter to Spielrein on January 20, 1913 (Carotenuto, 1982, p. 118; see also p. 95 of this volume). And when Spielrein many years later was to depart Western Europe for Russia, Freud enthusiastically testified to the respectful closeness he and Spielrein shared, in a letter dated February 9, 1923: "Your plan to go to Russia seems to me much better than my advice to try out Berlin. In Moscow you will be able to accomplish important work..." (as cited in Carotenuto, 1982, p. 127). From Freud's letter, we see that he and Spielrein had developed, over the years, a relationship based upon mutual respect. Freud had every confidence that she would carry psychoanalysis forward into Russia.

CHAPTER TWO

Enter Sabina Spielrein

In keeping with all this is the important role played by the sex-relation in the world of mankind, where it is really the invisible source of all action and conduct, and peeps up everywhere, in spite of all the veils thrown over it.

Arthur Schopenhauer

JOHN KERR'S *A Most Dangerous Method* comprises a history of the early years of psychoanalysis, inclusive of Freud and Jung's collaboration, friendship, and eventual acrimonious split. Sabina Spielrein figured prominently in this early history; she was Jung's "first psychoanalytic patient" (Minder, 2003a, p. 122), an important contributor to his thinking and to Freud's as well. As Covington (2003a) remarks in her account of Spielrein's contributions to psychoanalysis, "[I]t is likely we have Spielrein to thank...for the Jungian concept of anima" (p. 6), and, she continued, "Her most significant contribution to psychoanalysis has...been her concept of the 'destructive drive,' later to be reformulated by Freud as the 'death instinct'" (p. 6).

It was Spielrein's influential paper, "Destruction as a Cause of Coming into Being" (1912/1994), that was in part responsible for the development and reformulation of Freud's concept of the death instinct. Her "Destruction" paper, based firmly on the work of Freud, Jung, and Otto Rank, was eventually "recognized for its originality and depth of learning by the European analytic community" (Miller, 1998, pp. 45–46). Bruno Bettelheim, the eminent child psychologist and psychoanalyst, regarded Spielrein's work on the destructive impulse as a "seminal paper" in the annals of psychoanalysis (1983, p. 44). And as one historian of psychoanalysis observed, "Sabina Spielrein both anticipated and... initiated a major part of Freud's psychoanalytical discussions of man's fundamental instincts" (Ovcharenko, 1999, p. 162). Further, according to Cremerius's (2003) assessment, Spielrein's scholarly contributions to psychoanalytic theory enabled "Freud to [gain] a deeper understanding of the nature of transference, to discover countertransference...and recognize the...necessity of finding an antidote to the latter" (p. 78), as the transference process entered into the dynamic between therapist and patient.

By 1911, Spielrein had become a follower of psychoanalysis and a member of Freud's Vienna Psychoanalytic Society; she was the second female member to be inducted into this society. Her "Destruction" paper, which was her first theoretical paper, was presented to the Society on November 29 of that year. It was delivered in the presence of Freud and key members of his Vienna circle: Federn, Rank, Sachs, Stekel,

and Tausk, amongst others (Kerr, 1994). At that time, Spielrein introduced the concept of the destructive drive. In a seminal work, his revised edition of *Transformation and Symbols of the Libido* (1952), Jung credited this concept as being the basis for Freud's death drive, which figured prominently in Freud's later work in psychoanalytic theory (Covington, 2003a).

In Spielrein's "Destruction" paper, she introduced Bleuler's concept of "ambivalence." This concept embodied Bleuler's belief that all mental phenomena were like chemical elements: subject to a positive and negative charge. In a letter to Freud, Bleuler wrote, "[O]ur entire life is regulated by an interplay of contrasting forces. We find this in the chemical, as well as the nervous and psychic areas" (as cited in Makari, 2008, p. 208). Spielrein agreed with Bleuler's conception, claiming that "within us, negative impulses reside close to positive impulses" (1912 /1994, p. 173). She then went on to conceptualize sexuality as comprising positive (constructive) and negative (destructive) components. She argued that "thoughts of death are contained in the sexual instinct itself" (as cited in Makari, 2008, p. 313) and thus existed beside sexuality. As Spielrein remarked, "[T]he reproductive drive... consists psychologically of two antagonistic components, a destructive drive as well as a drive for coming into being" (1912/1994, p. 184).

It was not until nine years after Spielrein presented her "Destruction" paper, that Freud acknowledged the influence this paper had on his conception of the death instinct. Even then, the acknowledgement was meagre: a mere footnote

in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, published in 1920 (Cremerius, 2003). Although public acknowledgement of his debt to Spielrein was long delayed, Freud had written privately to Jung after Spielrein's 1911 presentation to the Society: "She is very bright... There is meaning in everything she says." At that point, however, he was not yet ready to accept her ideas. The letter continues, "[H]er destructive drive is not to my liking, because I believe it is personally conditioned. She seems abnormally ambivalent" (Freud & Jung, 1974, p. 494). Jung concurred with Freud's opinion, responding that her paper was "over-weighted with her own complexes" (as cited in Covington, 2003a, p. 3).

The "Destruction" Paper of 1912

IN THE OPENING paragraph of Spielrein's "Destruction" paper, she asked a crucial question:

Throughout my involvement with sexual problems, one question has especially interested me: why does this most powerful drive, the reproductive instinct [sexual drive], harbor negative feelings in addition to inherently positive feelings? These negative feelings, such as anxiety and disgust, must be overcome in order to use the drive appropriately...[for] an individual's negative attitude towards sexual activity strikes especially [not exclusively] to the core of the neurotic. (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 155)

Before proceeding to elaborate on Spielrein's question and her intriguing response to it, we might want to consider if her question has a personal reference. Was she talking about her own sexuality, her clinical experience, the experience of members of her own family, or the general population? It has been suggested that she was likely making reference to herself (Launer, 2011), for whatever existing theories were used at the time to explain the anxiety that surrounded sex in both normal and neurotic populations (such as theories proposed by Freud, Jung, and Bleuler, among others) were unsatisfactory accounts of sexuality for her, both personally and as a theoretician and clinician. For example, one theory suggested by her colleague Otto Gross (1877–1920)⁵ centered on the negative feelings that arise from the closeness of the sexual organs to those of excretion. Another theory purported that the social risks involved in sex—including attacks from rivals and fear of social exclusion—were cause for the anxiety (Launer, 2011).

Jung proposed that sexual anxiety might be linked to the fears of future conflicts of interest with children, to our sense of our offspring as rivals. In this regard, Jung said, "To be fruitful provokes one's downfall: at the rise of the next generation, the previous one has exceeded its peak. Our descendants become our most dangerous enemies for whom we

5. Historians regard Gross as a maverick in the early psychoanalytic camp. Jung considered him the "nearest...to a romantic idea of a genius I have ever met" (as cited in Kerr, 1994, p. 186).

are unprepared. They will survive and take power from our enfeebled hands" (as cited in Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 155). Spielrein found one of Jung's ideas in particular appealing, quoting him in her "Destruction" paper: "Passionate longing has two aspects: it is a power that beautifies everything and...destroys everything" (as cited in Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 155). She then went on to say that Jung's observation, implying an "unknown fear lying within erotic activity corresponds...well to my results" (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 156). We might speculate the results she referred to were based on her personal experiences and introspections, as well as her clinical work with patients.

In drawing upon Jung's reference to the negative side of sexual experience, it is conceivable that Spielrein was referring to her own sexual experiences in the context of the initially tender intimacy (or as she called it, "poetry,") that she shared with Jung, in full bloom by 1907 or 1908. The secretiveness and tenderness of their affair she revealed in verse: "No ashes, no coals / can have such a glow / As a secretive love / of which no one must know" (as cited in Carotenuto, 1982, p. 102).

The "poetry" they shared did not last. By the spring of 1909, their affair came to an end, with Spielrein bitterly remarking that Jung "smashed my whole life" (as cited in Carotenuto, 1982, p. 42). Yet, in spite of her professed bitterness toward Jung, Spielrein wrote to Freud on June 10, 1909, "My dearest wish is that I may part from him in love" (as cited in Carotenuto, 1982, p. 92).

There seems “little doubt that by 1908 Jung and Spielrein were engaged in physical contact,” as there is much mention of “poetry” in her diary from 1907–1908 (Launer, 2011, p. 27). Thus it is conceivable that she may have been mixing theoretical speculations on sexuality with personal disclosure. It has been suggested that it was Spielrein’s “erotic transference to Jung (and his to her) that led her to conceptualize a destructive aspect in the drive to love” and to sexuality in general (Covington, 2003a, pp. 6–7). Furthermore, in borrowing Bleuler’s concept of “ambivalence,” she may have been betraying her own uncertainties and anxiety about sexuality, for as she said, “You feel the enemy...within; its characteristic ardour compels you, with inflexible urgency, to do what you do not want to do; you feel the end...before which you vainly may attempt to flee to an uncertain future” (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 156).

Let’s now return to Spielrein’s “Destruction” paper and the question she raised in regard to the “negative and positive feelings” which, she speculated, accompany the expression of the reproductive/sexual drive. First, in addressing her question and the response to it, it may be worthwhile to present a little background on Spielrein’s thinking on the instincts. In agreement with the psychoanalytical concepts then current, Spielrein endorsed two principle instincts: an instinct for self-preservation, which strives to maintain sameness and protect the individual from unwanted change, and the conflicting instinct for species-preservation (sexuality), which presses for change through mate selection and repro-

duction. In developing her thesis, she drew attention to two psychic structures: the ego and the unconscious. The ego, depending on the energy provided by the instinct for self-preservation, seeks to maintain its own individuality and stability and to resist anything that would impose unwanted change. The unconscious, on the other hand, depends on the energy from sexuality, provided by the instinct of species-preservation. Seeking to achieve its own aims, the unconscious is indifferent to the aims of the individual, enforcing its collective and racial aims directed at the continuation of the species. These aims are given preference over those of the individual.

According to Kerr (1994), Spielrein's thesis suggested that "Sexuality does not care what...creation 'costs' the individual...[and] from the standpoint of the ego, sexuality contains an implicit threat of [ego] dissolution" (p. 320). Therefore, Kerr claims that as the aims of sexuality (the reproductive drive) make themselves felt, they come into conflict with the singular motives of the individual, the "I." The main point in Kerr's instructive analysis of Spielrein's thesis is that "*against sexuality the ego always responds with an attitude of resistance [emphasis in original]...and sexual desire will be accompanied by defense reactions—expressed most often by... the evocation of images of death and destruction—which represents the protest of the 'I' [ego] against its dissolution*" (pp. 321–322). As Spielrein (1912/1994) commented, "The frequency with which sexual wishes are associated with images of death is noteworthy" (p. 155), as these images represent

the protest of the ego to its dissolution. And in his 1999 analysis of Spielrein's thesis, Ovcharenko remarks, "The basic idea at the heart of [Spielrein's] report was a simple one... [A]ny change or growth assumes the destruction and annihilation of the former state; growth therefore has the meaning of calling attention to the destructive elements of human attraction" (p. 360). Kerr's and Ovcharenko's analyses provide evidence that there is general agreement in regards to Spielrein's "Destruction" thesis.

Covington (2003a) seconds Ovcharenko (1999) in suggesting that the emergence of Spielrein's idea of destruction was bound up with the events of the Jung-Spielrein relationship. As Ovcharenko says, "The original conception came to birth through her own suffering...from grieving over the 'mad passion' of her love for Jung" (1999, p. 359).

Covington (2003a) also suggests that, "It can be argued that it was Spielrein's erotic transference to Jung (and his to her) that led her to conceptualize a destructive aspect in the drive to love" (pp. 6-7), calling for the "relinquishment of the ego" (Covington, 2012, p. 237). In a diary entry, Spielrein recorded her conception of destruction as follows:

This demonic force, whose very essence is destruction (evil) and at the same time is the creative force, since out of destruction (of two individuals) a new one arises. That is the fact of the sexual drive which is by nature a destructive drive, an exterminating drive for the individual, and for the last reason, in

my opinion, must overcome such great resistance in everyone. (as cited in Carotenuto, 1982, pp. 107–108)

For Spielrein, then, the concept of love was one of a merging or loss of ego; the ego's self-interest must give way to sexuality, the reproductive drive.

Kerr (1994) comments that for Spielrein, "[S]exuality contains an implicit threat of dissolution" (p. 320). As the force of the sexual instinct asserts itself, it is conceivable that psychic processes are ruled by more than a search for pleasure (sexuality) and the avoidance of pain (Makari, 2008). That is, psychic processes may have an inherent need for stability arising from an unsettling "antagonism between the *Individual Ego and the Species Ego* [emphasis added], which is connected with the drive to self-preservation and the drive to continuation of the species" (Van Waning, 1992, p. 400). As we noted above, the ego resists change, setting up defensive reactions to ward off any potential threat to its dissolution as the destructive component of sexuality presents itself.

The idea that psychic processes gravitate toward stability was put forward in the mid-1800s by Gustave Fechner (1801–1887). Fechner was a physician and physicist who, along with E. H. Weber (1795–1878), took up the experimental study of external stimuli and their psychic representations. After years of painstaking research, Fechner published *Elements of Psychophysics* (1860/1966) which offered an innovative approach for studying the relations between mind and body. It is likely that Freud was influenced by Fechner's

thinking, Freud having postulated that all drives were inherently conservative and directed at the maintenance of inner peace through the discharge of excitation that builds in the nervous system. Fechner and Freud were in agreement on the organism's need for constancy or stability. Instability was unpleasurable, and therefore a compelling need for constancy could override choices between pleasure and pain (Makari, 2008).

For Freud, the dominating principle of mental life was the "need of the organism to reach a state of tranquility by... discharging all tensions...Bliss, in the Freudian scheme, is attained when needs have been satisfied and passions spent" (Storr, 1989, p. 23). Freud postulated in his book *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915/1986) that the "nervous system is an apparatus which has the function of getting rid of the stimuli that reach it, or of reducing them to the lowest possible level" (p. 116). Freud called this instinctive drive aiming for stability, the "principle of constancy" (Thurschwell, 2009, p. 83). Maintaining inner equilibrium was, for Freud, a cardinal rule of psychic and bodily function; pleasure comes from the discharge of excess excitation arising from inner and outer sources. In this light, Freud's view coincided with Fechner's. Decades later, Spielrein's "Destruction" thesis built on Fechner (1860) and Freud's (1895) related concepts. Thus, Spielrein's conception of psychic processes was a dynamic one. There is the self-preservation instinct that keeps the peace, offering the ego protection from disequilibrium, striving to ensure stability, as Fechner, Freud, and Spielrein sug-

gested. There is also an opposing force, the species-preservation instinct, asserting itself in the service of procreation, and in doing so, upsetting the balance that the ego strives to maintain.

Freud and Jung were intrigued by Spielrein's "Destruction" thesis. As we noted earlier, Jung acknowledged Spielrein as the originator of the idea of the death instinct. Freud also acknowledged his indebtedness to her, citing her elucidation of the destructive drive, which in 1920 he reformulated as the "death instinct" in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Ovcharenko, 1999). Freud viewed the death instinct (Thanatos, an attraction to death, destruction, and aggression) as an innate force opposing the life instinct (Eros), emphasizing the former instinct's regressive nature in reducing excessive or unwanted excitations and tensions created by the life instinct. Jung came to view the death instinct as a regressive pull in which the ego would be dissolved for the purposes of renewal and reconstitution (Covington, 2003a). Jung's view of the creative aspect of the destructive drive appears to harmonize with Spielrein's conception of destruction; out of destruction and dissolution of a prior state, a new state, a new ego, arises. Spielrein further elaborated on the creative aspect in her "Destruction" thesis:

Self-preservation is a "static" drive because it must protect the existing individual from foreign influences; preservation of the species is a "dynamic" drive that strives for change [the ego defends against unwanted change], the "resurrection" of the individ-

ual in a new form. No change can take place without destruction of a former condition. (1912/1994, p. 174)

This corresponded to Freud's idea that the ego defends itself against unwanted change, against the excess excitation that might disturb inner peace.

Spielrein went on to clarify how the destructive component within the reproductive drive can assert itself:

The instinct for preservation of the species, a reproductive drive, expresses itself...in the tendency to dissolve and assimilate [transformation of the I to the We], differentiating a new form...“Where love reigns, the ego, the ominous despot, dies.” When one is in love, the blending of the ego in the beloved is the strongest affirmation of self, a new ego existence in the person of the beloved. (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 174)

In this passage Spielrein reveals her conception of love as a merging or loss of ego; as she says, “the blending of the ego in the beloved,” and as Covington (2003a) affirms, “at the expense of the ego” (p. 9). The resistance on the part of the ego to be merged with another is an issue that Spielrein addressed. “Throughout my involvement,” she said, “with sexual problems, one question has especially interested me: Why does the most powerful drive, the reproductive instinct, harbor negative feelings in addition to the inherently anticipated positive feelings?” (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 155). Responding to her own question, Spielrein wrote:

The instinct for self-preservation is a simple drive that originates exclusively from a positive component; the instinct for preservation of the species, which must dissolve the old to create the new, arises from both positive and negative components. In its nature, preservation of the species is ambivalent...[T]he impulse of the positive component simultaneously summons forth the impulse of the negative component and opposes it. Self-preservation is a “static” drive because it must protect the...individual from foreign influences; preservation of the species is a “dynamic” drive that strives for change, the “resurrection” of the individual in a new form. No change can take place without destruction of the former condition. (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 174)

The first of Spielrein’s available diaries is from around 1905–1907, and these pages contain some of the ideas that she was later to develop into her “Destruction” paper. She wrote in her diary:

Every individual must disappear...In case of the amoeba the whole “personality” in fact literally disappears; in the case of the human being only a fraction disappears. But the instinct is always one of death, the annihilation of the personality, two individual fused into one...This is also how the resistance of every personality to the sexual instinct can be explained...[B]y destroying, a man wants to an-

nihilate himself while the woman wants to be annihilated. (as cited in Moll, 2003, p. 21)

Thus, the sexual drive, “this most powerful drive,” harbours “negative feelings” by virtue of its destructive potential for the individual: the “annihilation” that is inherent in the expression of the drive in both the man and woman. Resistance to this procreative force may result from a conflict between the individual’s attempt to preserve ego-stability, or ego-identity, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the corresponding temptation to merge with another, actualizing the “anticipated positive feelings” that may come about through sexual union. Thus, striving to maintain sameness and protect the individual (“I”) from unwanted change, thereby honouring the self-preservation instinct, conflicts with the species-preservation drive that presses for change through sexual union and the creation of the new.

The “Biological Facts”

A KEY SECTION of Spielrein’s “Destruction” paper of 1912 was entitled “Biological Facts.” Here she explained how biological facts underpin certain psychological processes. Four critical points in her argument are presented on page 39, opposite.

Spielrein drew on the reproductive behaviour of lower organisms and extrapolated from her observations of lower species, applying these “biological facts” in her attempt to understand human sexuality. She did, however, recognize

Four Critical Points in the “Biological Facts“

1. During reproduction, a union of female and male cells takes place and in this process each cell is destroyed and from the product of this destruction a new cell arises. Following the creation a new generation, many lower species e.g. the mayfly, forfeit their lives, dying off. Creation for this organism is undertaken for survival and is simultaneously destructive to the adult. (Spielrein, 1912/1994, p. 156)
2. The fusion of germ cells during copulation mimics the correspondingly intimate union of two individuals: a union in which one forces its way into another...The male component merges with the female component that becomes reorganized and assumes a new form mediated by the unfamiliar intruder. An alteration comes over the whole organism: destruction and reconstruction...occur rapidly. (pp. 156–157)
3. It would be highly unlikely if the individual did not at least surmise, through corresponding feelings, these internal deconstructive-reconstructive events. The joyful feeling of coming into being that is present within the reproductive drive is accompanied by a feeling of resistance, of anxiety or disgust. (p. 157)
4. The individual must strongly hunger for this new creation in order to place its own destruction in creation's service. (p. 156)

the limitations of extrapolating from her observations of lower species and applying these “biological facts” to human behaviour. She noted that, “In more highly organized multicellular systems, the whole individual will obviously not be destroyed during the sexual act” (p. 156). Yet, the germ cells (eggs or sperm) comprising the reproductive unit will be destroyed: “Fertilization destroys these important substances...[as the] male component merges with the female component that becomes reorganized and assumes a new form mediated by the unfamiliar intruder” (p. 156). Spielrein depicted sex as a form of invasion, leading to the destruction of genes from both partners in the reconstitution of life. Modern biology also places an emphasis on sexual reproduction as a process in which each gender tries—sometimes with astonishing destructiveness—to impose its genetic will on the other, in order to prevail in the next generation (Launer, 2011).

In the case of males, Baker and Bellis’s (1995) analysis of the biology of sex suggests that not all sperm simply race to fertilize an ovum so as to be represented in the next generation. They claim that only one sperm in 100 is actually seeking the ovum after ejaculation. Of the remaining sperm, about 80% are described as “killers.” These sperm chemically attack and disable other “foreign” sperm (contributed by a different male). Another 20% of sperm, they suggest, are probably somewhat old and tired already (the life cycle of a sperm cell is only a matter of days to weeks). They are more passive, and collect around the cervical opening in an appar-

ent attempt to block the entry of sperm. “Sperm competition” along with destruction of foreign intruders is, according to Baker and Bellis’s analysis, a common feature in species that rely on internal fertilization (Liebert & Spiegler, 1998).

Thus, in the context of Spielrein’s “Destruction” thesis, just as a man physically invades the woman, so that his sperm invades her egg, leading to “destruction” and then a “reconstitution” of biological material to bring about new life, similarly “killer” sperm in Baker and Bellis’s analysis, attack and disable “foreign” intruders in the case of multiple matings in order to ensure that a given male’s sperm will prevail into the next generation. Baker and Bellis’s analysis lends credence to Spielrein’s “Destruction” thesis; the biology of sexual reproduction truly involves some element of “destruction as a cause of coming into being.”

It is clear that Spielrein showed considerable foresight in conceptualizing the dialectic of life: destruction and reconstruction—or in Freud’s terms, Eros (life) and Thanatos (death)—as inevitable partners in the drama in the biopsychological life cycle.

Thus, the feelings of resistance that arise, the accompanying “anxiety and disgust” and “negative feelings” to which Spielrein drew attention, must be overcome by an extraordinary urge, a “hunger,” for this “new creation.” The reference to a “hunger” (i.e., sexual drive) that Spielrein put forward anticipated by many decades the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins’s forceful argument (1986) that “living organisms exist for the benefit of DNA” (p. 126). The

“drive” to procreate, to be represented in the next generation, implicit in Dawkins’s pronouncement, and anticipated by Spielrein seventy-five years earlier, demonstrates the linkage between Spielrein’s biologically informed psychology and modern evolutionary psychology.

It will be remembered that Freud, in his initial work in neurology and physiology, also attempted to weave these two sciences into biologically informed psychology. In his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* of 1895, Freud stated:

The intention [of this project] is to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles...
(1895/1986, p. 295)

However, Freud soon abandoned his neurophysiological program and declared that, henceforth, “I shall remain upon psychological ground” (1900–1901/1986, p. 536). Yet, similar reductionist motives remained prominent in his works, where the neuron’s role as a naturalistic explanatory principle is supplanted by the conception of instinct or drive (*Trieb*) as a form of biological energy (Casey & Woody, 1983). The ambitions of the *Project* still echoed many years later, in Freud’s *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, completed in 1938 and posthumously published in 1940, wherein Freud declared that psychology is “a natural science like any other” (1986, p. 158).

In light of these statements, it is plausible to interpret Freudian psychoanalysis as a form of reductionist psychol-

ogy that attempts to resolve what is human into a biological substrate of instinctual energies (Casey & Woody, 1983). And yet, years earlier, in October of 1911, Freud expelled the followers of Alfred Adler for placing too much emphasis on biology in the role of mental illness (Launer, 2011). And, the day after Spielrein presented her "Destruction" paper, on November 29, 1911, Freud wrote Jung, "What troubles me most is that Fräulein Spielrein wants to subordinate the psychological material to biological considerations; this dependency is no more acceptable than dependency on philosophy, physiology or brain anatomy. Psychoanalysis goes by itself" (as cited in Launer, 2011, p. 54).

Freud never completely freed himself from the grip of biology and its role in psychoanalytic psychology. When in 1911 Spielrein came to the podium at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society to present the "biological facts," she stood between Freud's 1895 abandonment of his neurophysiological *Project* and his more sympathetic attitude toward biology and its place in psychology as expressed in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* in 1940. Thus, Freud betrayed his ambivalence about a biologically informed psychology in his *Outline* and perhaps that is why in his comments to Jung following Spielrein's presentation in November 1911, Freud revealed an antipathy toward her thesis that stemmed from "biological facts" as she presented them in her understanding of the biopsychology of sex.

It was not until 1920 that Freud expressed his indebtedness to Spielrein, citing her elucidation of the destructive

drive leading to his idea of a death instinct, an instinct which by definition is a biological property of the organism. In his acknowledgement of Spielrein, Freud was reconnecting with biology and with Spielrein's biologically based thesis of "destruction" as an integral feature of the species-preservation drive (sexuality), which she presented eight years earlier and to which, at that time, he revealed his antipathy.

Perhaps by 1920, and certainly by 1938, the biological paradigm was explicitly acknowledged. In a reminiscence in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, written in 1930, he tried to understand his rejection of Spielrein's thesis nineteen years earlier. "I remember," he wrote, "my own defensive attitude when the idea of an instinct of destruction first emerged in the psycho-analytic literature, and how long it took me before I became receptive to it" (Freud, 1929–1930/1986, p. 120). Freud's receptivity to Spielrein's "De-struction" thesis, with its underpinnings in biology, brought Freud back to his original neurophysiological thesis of the *Project* of 1895. Perhaps Spielrein's biological thesis, as she presented it in the first quarter of the twentieth century, reminded Freud of the *Project*, a project from which he had been attempting to distance himself since the late 1890s, but to which he eventually became reconciled in the 1920s and 1930s. It will be recalled that Freud admitted to Fliess in 1895 that the *Project* was a kind of "madness." During the 1890s, and for many years thereafter, Freud cast a suspicious eye on any attempts that would rest psychoanalysis on biological foundations. He was initially not hospitable to Spielrein's

thesis, which, as he understood it, would “subordinate the psychological to biological considerations.” As noted earlier, Freud declared that he “shall remain on psychological ground” for “psychoanalysis goes by itself,” without dependency on biology (as cited in Launer, 2011, p. 54). It is to the credit of Spielrein that Freud eventually modified his strict psychological determinism by bringing psychoanalytic psychology into alignment with biology.

